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THE SOUTH AND THE NEGRO.

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THE social crisis through which the South is now passing is far more serious than those who are unfamiliar with Southern conditions suppose. The illustrious Henry W. Grady, whose public utterances on this subject were received in all sections with commendation and applause, once said: "The future holds a problem in solving which the South must stand alone. This problem is to carry within her body politic two separate races, nearly equal in numbers. She must carry these races in peace, for discord means ruin; she must carry them separately, for assimilation means debasement; she must carry them in equal justice, for to this she is pledged in honor and in gratitude; she must carry them even unto the end, for in human probability she will never be quit of either." This is true with one exception. The South cannot solve this problem standing alone; she must have the sympathy and support of all sections to assist her in accomplishing the great work which Providence has entrusted to her. Mr. Grady recognized this, and repeatedly emphasized it on many subsequent occasions.

The South accepted in good faith the problem which was thrust upon her, and, trusting in the guidance of God and in the justice and sympathy of a united people, she pledged her sacred honor to execute her trust faithfully. She knew that she must solve the problem by meeting, as best she could, conditions as they arose. She had no past experience to guide her, for there is no instance recorded in history where two alien and dissimilar races have ever existed side by side, on a plane of civil and political equality, for any length of time, in peace. She also knew that she must solve it so as to give the inferior race every indus-

trial and educational advantage; less than these would not satisfy the exacting demands of justice and humanity. She knew, too, that she must hold the confidence and win the gratitude of the inferior race, at the same time maintain a social barrier across which no alien foot should come, and preserve at all hazards Anglo-Saxon ascendancy. No attempt should be made to disguise this fact, no excuse should be offered for it, and no deception should be practiced on the public. Deception and evasion are the resorts of the crafty and the cowardly. Honesty in this, as well as in other matters, is the best policy.

In a spirit, then, of absolute fairness, having only the best interest of our common country at heart, let us look the facts plainly in the face. All sections desire nothing more and nothing less than the whole truth; in this the South most heartily concurs. I have discussed this question with all classes of intelligent people, in nearly every State in the Union, from Virginia to California, and from Maine to Southern Texas; and, whenever I have discovered any bitterness or prejudice against the South, or any desire to condemn her because of her treatment of the negro race, I have found that it arose from a misconception of the facts.

Barring a few fanatics, whose opinions influence no one, and who persistently blind themselves to all truth, except that which they wish to find, the people everywhere are disposed to be just. To those, then, who are ready to recognize *truth* wherever found, the following facts are presented with the hope that they will conclusively show that the South has in no way failed in her duty to the negro race.

It is unnecessary to shock the sensibilities of the public by calling attention to the repulsive details of those crimes for which lynching, in some form, has been the almost invariable penalty. They have always been, however, of a nature so brutal and so savage that no pen can describe and no imagination picture them. It is only necessary to say, in this connection, that the South once more stands arraigned before the bar of public opinion, charged with brutal and inhuman treatment of this weak and inferior race, of whom she is the natural guardian and protector. Let judgment be not hastily rendered. If she deserves a verdict against her, by all means let her be condemned; but if she is innocent, let justice hasten to remedy the wrongs which in some sections have been ignorantly done her.

All thoughtful people, who have intelligently considered this much discussed subject, must uphold the conclusion that, generally speaking, the desire on the part of a large number of citizens in any given community to take the law into their own hands, and summarily try and execute criminal offenders, must arise from one of the following causes:—1. An ignorance of the fact that the safety of society depends upon a just and orderly administration of the law, and that however righteous the cause may seem to be which, on any given occasion, influences the mob, the inevitable tendency of mob violence is to anarchy; 2. Some defect in the machinery of the law, which renders the administration of justice tedious and uncertain; 3. The ungovernable fury to which the people are aroused by the exceptionally heinous nature of the particular crime which they organize to avenge.

The first of these probable causes for mob violence may be dismissed with but few words. Lynchings have occurred in all sections of the country. The mob has been organized for its deadly work in the centres, as well as on the borders, of civilization. The lawless acts of the mob at Urbana and Akron, Ohio, Pana, Illinois, and New York will go down in the history of crime side by side with those in Texas, Georgia and New Orleans. In 1892, two hundred and forty-one lynchings were divided between twenty-seven States, scattered from Virginia to California, and from New York to Texas; in 1893, there were no less than one hundred and fifty-nine lynchings in fourteen different States; in 1894, eighteen States recorded them, and in 1897 the numbers rose to one hundred and sixty-six in twenty-five States; in 1898, the number of lynchings diminished, but in 1899, the mobs, in both the South and the middle West, surpassed in fury all past records. In the former, a negro brute, whose atrocious crime almost placed him outside the category of human beings, was horribly mangled and burned to death at the stake; in the latter, negro men and women were shot to death in a race riot caused by labor competition.

These facts prove conclusively that mob violence is not a sectional matter, nor is it the result of any desire or intention on the part of the white people of the South to oppress and ill treat the negro race. Lynchings in the South are mainly caused by the peculiar nature of the crimes for which lynching is a penalty, and partly, perhaps, by the delay and uncertainty incident to all legal

proceedings everywhere. I recall, in this connection, the following case which happened in Virginia some years ago. A young negro, who had been raised by a respectable farmer and treated always with kindness and consideration, abused in an unspeakable manner, and then murdered, the farmer's five-year-old child. He was apprehended and hurried secretly to a distant jail. There, cool counsels prevailed, and in due course he was tried and convicted. An appeal was taken, and, on a technicality, the Supreme Court reversed the decision of the lower court, and remanded the case for a new trial. At the second trial, he was again convicted and the case was again appealed. A year had now passed, and the patience of the people had become exhausted. They consequently took him out and hung him to the nearest convenient tree. Two other cases are also recalled, in each of which a defense of insanity was set up, the accused was ably defended, expert testimony was introduced, and, after a long delay, a bitter fight and great notoriety, they were executed in an orderly way.

The crime itself, however, is more responsible for mob violence than all other causes combined. The Anglo-Saxons have always been distinguished above other races for their passionate devotion to their homes; they have never considered life too dear a sacrifice to offer in its defense. When the intelligence, then, is flashed through a community that a home has been despoiled, that its protector has been slain, that the mother or the wife or the daughter or the idolized child—none has been spared—has been torn violently from the family circle and left worse than dead, I care not how quiet and how orderly the community may be, nor how promptly the officers of the law may act, nor what barriers they may throw around the criminal, the chances are that all will be equally helpless to protect him. The deepest passions are inflamed, the fiercest instincts of the race are aroused, reason is temporarily dethroned, law and order forgotten, mob violence runs riot and death falls upon the criminal with a power as terrible and as resistless as a thunderbolt discharged from an angry storm cloud. No right-thinking man or woman, white or black, ought to have, or can have, any sympathy for such criminals as those who suffer death for the crimes described, nor can they believe that any punishment, however cruel or severe, is undeserved. The fact, however, that the tendency of mob violence is to destroy liberty, to abolish courts and to dissolve the bonds of society,

renders it of the utmost importance to devise the surest and most practical way to stop or at least to check it. In full realization of this, the leading citizens of the South have conscientiously devoted their best talents to that end.

One practical way in which the evil may be remedied will be to make such changes in the penal laws as will insure a certain and speedy administration of justice, and do away with the harassing and painful necessity of a rigid cross examination of the victims, either in open court or behind closed doors. It is of the utmost importance, too, to make the lawless element among the negroes clearly understand that crime will be surely and speedily punished, and the better class of their own race should lose no opportunity to denounce negro criminals, and they should do all in their power to assist in bringing the guilty to justice. If this is consistently done, it will unquestionably tend to check crime; but, as it will not go to the root of the matter, it will not effectually prevent it. This can only be accomplished by elevating the moral and intellectual condition of the young, ignorant and shiftless element of the negro race. It is a well known fact that from this element come nearly all negro criminals.

History teaches us that education, in its most comprehensive sense, is the only known means by which the desired results can be obtained. Freedom without intelligence and without virtue is a dangerous possession, because without these liberty is too often synonymous with license. The South has gone to the limit of her resources to confer this priceless gift upon the negro race. She now expends about forty millions of dollars annually in school funds, of which sum the negroes contribute but one-thirtieth, though they have the opportunity to reap nearly half the benefit. In the South, all trades are open to them, and they receive every encouragement to become proficient in the industrial arts. A large number of negroes have eagerly taken advantage of these opportunities and have made unprecedented progress in bettering their condition in every way. They have amassed in one State property, the assessed value of which is nearly thirty millions of dollars, and it is estimated that they own, all told, about three hundred millions of dollars' worth of personal and real estate. They have their own doctors, lawyers, and preachers; they have been given the best schools, colleges, and universities, and they have their own military companies. Many

of them realize that their interests are inseparable from the interests of the South. They have found by experience that the people who give them employment, who annually pay millions of dollars that their children may be educated, who make it possible for them to acquire wealth, who labor side by side with them in the field and in the factory, are their best friends. The criminals, as a rule, do not come from this class, but from that far larger class who have failed, or refused, to take advantage of their opportunities, and who seem to have little or no moral conception of crime. It is this class who constantly menace isolated Southern homes with a danger worse than death, that threaten to depopulate rural districts and paralyze agriculture. It is this class who have no regard for human life and who seem to revel in crime. These are they who terrorize the defenseless of both races, who encourage criminals, secrete them and assist them to escape, who make martyrs of them when they are captured, and who kill the fatted calf and receive them with open arms when they return from penal servitude.

Criminal statistics show that while only twelve per cent. of the population of the United States are negroes, this race furnishes thirty per cent. of the criminals and twenty-eight per cent. of the murderers, including all races.

But, even with these facts before us, and dark as the picture may seem to be, and heavy as the burden which the South must yet bear, she not only is not without hope, but she has unwavering confidence in the future. Education and civilizing influences must ultimately win the victory over ignorance and vice; if they do not, education is a failure and the history of civilization a lie. These influences will lessen crime, and the law-making power, encouraged by public opinion, which after all is the dominant power in a free government, and of which Legislatures are but the reflectors, will devise some swift and adequate punishment for it.

The South will solve her problem. She will work out her own salvation; and in this great labor for humanity she will have, and she will deserve, the encouragement, the sympathy and the support of this now united people, who are striving only for the best interests of a common country.

MARION L. DAWSON.